



OPEN INNOVATION IN MARKETING RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Open innovation (OI), defined as the purposive management of knowledge inflows and outflows to accelerate innovation, has become an increasingly prominent framework in marketing scholarship as markets digitize and value creation shifts toward interactive ecosystems. Despite this growing interest, marketing oriented OI research remains conceptually dispersed across adjacent constructs such as co creation, customer engagement, user innovation, social media enabled collaboration, and platform mediated communities. This study provides a bibliometric review that maps the conceptual and empirical development of OI in marketing research through an analysis of keyword co occurrence patterns and thematic evolution. Following established bibliometric guidelines, the domain is synthesized using VOSviewer science mapping techniques, including network, overlay, and density visualizations. The resulting network structure positions open innovation as a central hub connected to three dominant thematic areas. These include co creation and new product development, frequently examined in SME and Industry 4.0 contexts; digital and social media enabled engagement and prosumption; and value co creation and interactive marketing within customer communities and networked organizational forms.

1. INTRODUCTION

Open innovation (OI) emerged as a paradigm shift from closed, firm-centric R&D to a distributed model in which firms intentionally orchestrate external and internal knowledge flows to improve innovation outcomes (Chesbrough, 2003; Dahlander & Gann, 2010). While OI originated primarily in technology and innovation management, it has become increasingly relevant for marketing scholarship because marketing is inherently boundary spanning: it interfaces with customers, partners, communities, and channels where knowledge about needs, usage, and value-in-context is produced and exchanged (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Grönroos, 2008).

The integration of OI into marketing has accelerated with digitization. Social media, digital platforms, and online communities have altered how firms search for ideas, engage customers, and co-develop offerings, enabling new forms of user innovation and co-creation at scale (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; von Hippel, 2005). Marketing research has simultaneously emphasized interactive relationships and engagement, shifting from transactional perspectives toward dynamic value co-creation processes (Brodie et al., 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). These shifts converge: OI provides a knowledge-flow logic, while marketing provides relational and experiential mechanisms through which openness can be implemented and measured (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; West & Bogers, 2014).

Despite rapid growth, marketing-oriented OI scholarship remains fragmented. Conceptual work often draws on service-dominant logic, co-creation, and customer engagement, while empirical research spans multiple settings—from SMEs and NPD projects to platform ecosystems—using heterogeneous metrics and designs (Ranjan & Read, 2016; Nambisan, 2017). As a result, there is a need for a systematic synthesis of the field's structure and evolution. Bibliometric reviews address such needs by mapping intellectual and thematic structures quantitatively, identifying clusters, and detecting emerging topics (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Donthu et al., 2021).

This study aims to consolidate and clarify the intellectual landscape of open innovation in marketing research by using bibliometric mapping to reveal the domain's conceptual structure, thematic concentration, and temporal evolution. Bibliometric review methods are well suited for domains

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characterized by rapid growth and conceptual dispersion, as they enable researchers to synthesize patterns in large bodies of literature and identify dominant themes as well as emerging research fronts through systematic, replicable procedures (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Building on this logic, the present review addresses three guiding questions: (RQ1) What is the conceptual structure of open innovation in marketing research as indicated by keyword co-occurrence relationships? (RQ2) Which thematic clusters dominate the field and how are they connected across conceptual and empirical streams? (RQ3) How has the field evolved over time, and what topics appear to be emerging as future research fronts? By answering these questions, the study provides a structured synthesis that supports cumulative theory building and helps scholars and practitioners understand how marketing perspectives have shaped, and been shaped by, open innovation research (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

2. METHODS

Bibliometric analysis quantitatively evaluates scientific literature using publication metadata such as authorship, keywords, and citation information and is well suited for mapping the structure and evolution of a research domain (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Donthu et al., 2021). This study focuses on science mapping through keyword co-occurrence analysis, which identifies thematic structures based on the frequency with which keywords appear together across publications (van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Zupic & Čater, 2015). The analysis draws on both author-provided keywords and index keywords to capture researcher-intended concepts as well as database-curated thematic descriptors.

We adopt a standard bibliometric workflow consisting of (1) database retrieval, (2) screening and cleaning, (3) keyword standardization and network construction, and (4) interpretation using visual maps (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). To enhance transparency, a PRISMA-style logic is reported, adapted to the metadata-based selection typical of bibliometric reviews (Page et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2021). Prior to network construction, keywords were standardized by merging spelling variants, singular and plural forms, and closely related synonyms (e.g., “co creation” and “co-creation”) to ensure conceptual consistency. A stop-word list was applied to remove generic and non-informative terms (e.g., “marketing,” “innovation,” “study”) that could otherwise dominate the co-occurrence network without contributing to meaningful thematic differentiation.

The bibliographic data were retrieved from Scopus, selected for its broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals and consistent indexing of bibliographic metadata suitable for bibliometric analysis. The search covered the period 2003–2026 and yielded a final corpus of 95 documents after applying the predefined query and filters. To ensure topical relevance at the intersection of open innovation and marketing, the search query was formulated as (“open innovation” AND marketing) AND (“co-creation” OR “collaboration” OR “customer involvement”), applied to the title, abstract, and keyword fields. Studies were included if they substantively addressed open innovation and marketing-relevant constructs such as co-creation, engagement, communities, or platform-based interaction, and excluded if open innovation was mentioned only peripherally, if publications were non-scholarly, or if the focus was purely technical without marketing implications.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Figure 1 positions “open innovation” as a central hub connected to multiple marketing-relevant concepts, consistent with OI’s role as an umbrella framing for distributed innovation processes (Chesbrough, 2003; Dahlander & Gann, 2010). The network suggests three major thematic areas, each reflecting a distinct but interconnected research stream.

Table 1. Top Keyword

Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
Co-Creation	9	16
Co-Innovation	3	21
Collaboration	4	10
Collaborative Innovation	2	5
Collaborative Networked Organisations	2	16

Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
crowdsourcing	4	11
customer communities	2	16
customer engagement	2	5
digital platforms	2	3
disruptive innovation	2	4
entrepreneurship	2	5
industry 4.0	2	4
innovation	8	13
interactive marketing	3	18
marketing	8	10
new product development	5	10
open innovation	43	58
prosumer	2	4
radical innovation	2	4
review	2	7
smes	2	6
social media	7	9
user experience	2	3
user innovation	2	3
value co-creation	7	19
value systems	2	16
virtual breeding environments	2	16
virtual organisations	2	16

The keyword co-occurrence network reveals three major thematic clusters, each representing a distinct but interconnected research stream. Quantitative characteristics of these clusters, including size and dominant keywords, are summarized in Table 1.

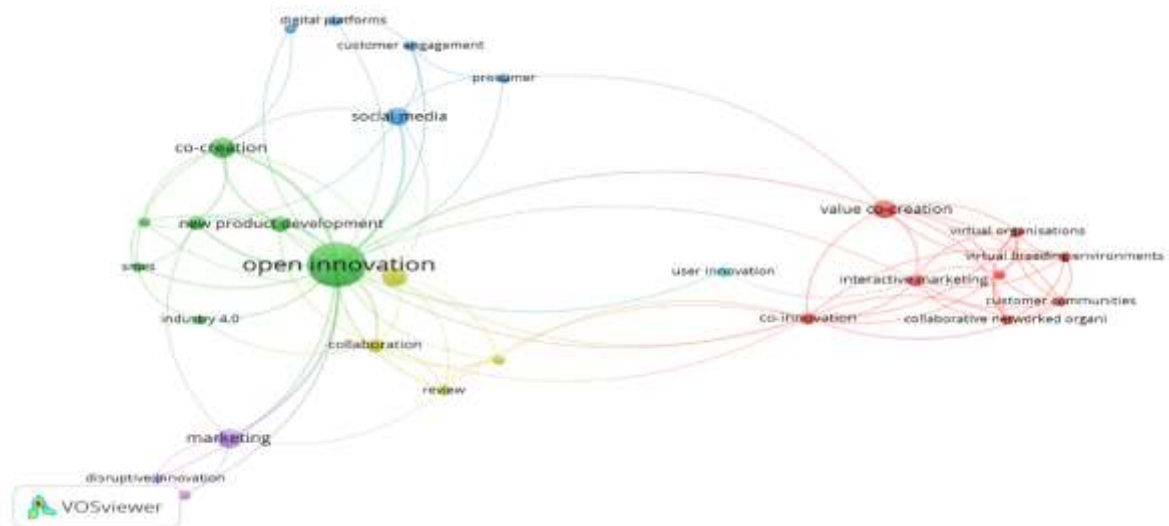


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Cluster 1 — Co-creation and new product development (NPD)

Cluster 1 comprises 15 keywords, making it the largest thematic group in the network. The most prominent keywords by occurrence and total link strength include co-creation, new product development,

customer involvement, SMEs, and Industry 4.0. This cluster reflects marketing's long-standing interest in customer participation as a mechanism to improve product-market fit, reduce uncertainty, and enhance innovation outcomes (Hoyer et al., 2010; von Hippel, 2005). Within the open innovation (OI) framework, these keywords correspond to inbound openness, where firms systematically integrate external customer knowledge into ideation, concept testing, and co-design processes (Chesbrough, 2003; West & Bogers, 2014). The presence of SMEs among the dominant terms suggests sustained attention to how resource-constrained firms leverage openness to compensate for limited internal R&D capacity, consistent with prior OI findings (Huizingh, 2011; Laursen & Salter, 2006).

A prominent cluster ties co-creation to new product development, with contextual cues such as SMEs and Industry 4.0 also appearing. This cluster reflects marketing's long-standing interest in customer involvement as a mechanism to improve product-market fit, reduce uncertainty, and enhance adoption (Hoyer et al., 2010; von Hippel, 2005). In OI terms, customer participation operates as inbound openness: firms access external knowledge by inviting customers into ideation, concept testing, and co-design (Chesbrough, 2003; West & Bogers, 2014).

In digital environments, virtual customer integration becomes feasible at scale, which prior research has theorized as "virtual customer environments" and co-creation platforms for NPD (Nambisan, 2002; Füller, 2010). Marketing studies often emphasize that co-creation is not uniformly beneficial; outcomes depend on governance, task structure, and the firm's ability to integrate external input (Hoyer et al., 2010; Dahlander & Gann, 2010). The presence of SMEs in the network suggests interest in how resource-constrained firms use openness to compensate for limited R&D capacity, aligning with broader OI findings that openness can substitute for internal resources when managed effectively (Huizingh, 2011; Laursen & Salter, 2006). Marketing-oriented OI frequently conceptualizes co-creation as the operational pathway through which external knowledge is sourced and transformed into market offerings, particularly in NPD settings (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne et al., 2008).

Cluster 2 — Social media, digital platforms, prosumption, and customer engagement

Cluster 2 contains 10 keywords, with high-frequency and high-link-strength terms including social media, digital platforms, customer engagement, and prosumer. This cluster captures research emphasizing digital interaction infrastructures as enablers of OI processes. The prominence of engagement-related keywords aligns with marketing theory that conceptualizes customers as active participants who contribute cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources beyond purchase behavior (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). From an OI perspective, engagement functions both as an antecedent to participation and as an outcome of innovation involvement, reinforcing the interaction between innovation activities and relationship marketing (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The structural centrality of prosumer highlights a boundary-blurring logic in which users co-produce content and innovations, raising governance and appropriability issues central to OI research (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; West & Bogers, 2014).

A second cluster connects social media, digital platforms, customer engagement, and prosumer, indicating a stream where digital interaction infrastructures enable OI processes. Social media's functional building blocks (identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, groups) facilitate rapid information diffusion and collective problem-solving, which can be leveraged for innovation ideation and testing (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The prominence of customer engagement aligns with marketing theory that frames customers as active participants who invest resources into interactions, thereby creating relational and informational value beyond purchase behavior (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). In OI contexts, engagement can be interpreted as both an antecedent to participation (why customers contribute ideas) and an outcome (enhanced loyalty and advocacy after participation), creating a reinforcing loop between innovation and relationship marketing (Brodie et al., 2011; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

The "prosumer" node highlights a boundary-blurring phenomenon where consumers co-produce content, experiences, and sometimes product modifications, consistent with user innovation theory and the democratization of innovation (von Hippel, 2005; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Platform-mediated prosumption suggests that firms increasingly treat communities as innovation partners, raising questions about incentives, fairness, and governance—issues also emphasized in OI research on appropriability and openness (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; West & Bogers, 2014). Interpretive proposition (map-derived): Digital

platforms and social media are not merely communication channels but innovation infrastructures that amplify engagement and enable scalable inbound OI (Nambisan, 2017; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Cluster 3 — Value co-creation, interactive marketing, and community/networked organization forms

Cluster 3 consists of 8 keywords, with dominant terms such as value co-creation, interactive marketing, customer communities, and networks. This thematic area is theoretically anchored in service-dominant logic, which frames value as emerging through interactions among actors who integrate resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). The concentration of community- and interaction-related keywords indicates a stream of research that treats OI as a market-facing, relational process supported by engagement platforms and coordinated networks (Payne et al., 2008; Grönroos, 2008). The presence of networked and virtual organizational terms further signals growing attention to ecosystem governance, including participation rules, coordination mechanisms, and value capture (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014; Jacobides et al., 2018).

A third thematic area features value co-creation, interactive marketing, customer communities, and terms indicating networked forms of organizing (e.g., collaborative networks, virtual organizations). This is theoretically consistent with S-D logic's premise that value emerges through interactions among actors who integrate resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). In this view, OI becomes a market-facing, interaction-driven process: firms design engagement platforms, coordinate actors, and facilitate resource integration that produces innovation and relational outcomes (Payne et al., 2008; Grönroos, 2008).

Customer communities function as both relational assets and knowledge reservoirs. Research on brand communities highlights how collective identity, norms, and shared practices can shape participation and knowledge sharing, which are crucial for OI outcomes (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Nambisan, 2002). The presence of "interactive marketing" suggests a focus on continuous, two-way communication and personalization, which can support iterative co-development and rapid experimentation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Brodie et al., 2011). Importantly, networked and virtual organizational forms imply that marketing-OI research increasingly engages with ecosystem and platform governance questions—how rules and coordination mechanisms shape who participates, what is shared, and how value is captured (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014; Jacobides et al., 2018). Value co-creation is a foundational theoretical anchor that links OI to interactive marketing and community-based innovation mechanisms (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Thematic evolution

The overlay visualization colors keywords by average publication year (figure 2). The pattern suggests a temporal progression in marketing-oriented OI scholarship from foundational marketing/innovation topics toward digitally mediated co-creation and engagement.

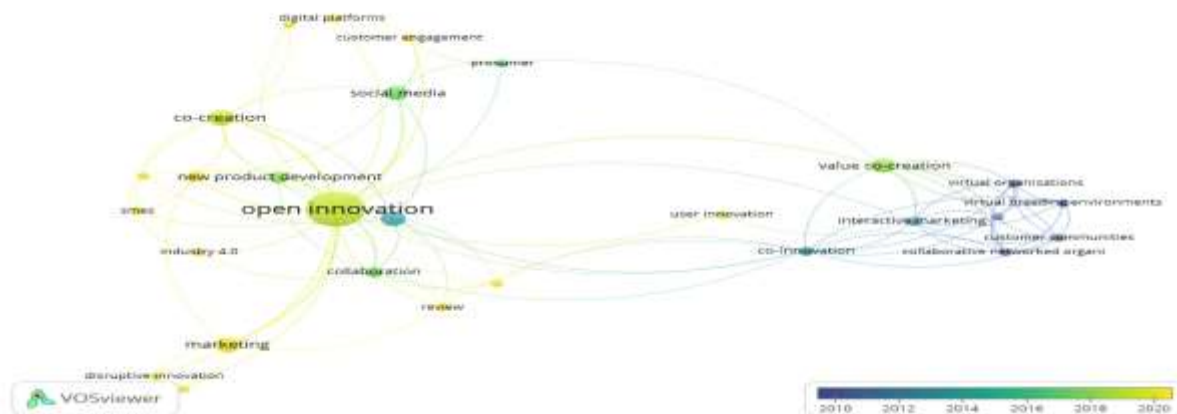


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Earlier terms appear closer to baseline innovation/marketing anchors (e.g., "marketing," "disruptive innovation"), consistent with initial phases where scholars established conceptual legitimacy and linked OI to known marketing frameworks (Chesbrough, 2003; Huizingh, 2011). Over time, more recent keywords align with digital platforms, customer engagement, social media, and value co-creation, reflecting

a broader shift toward ecosystem and platform views of innovation and marketing (Nambisan, 2017; Gawer & Cusumano, 2014).

This evolution is consistent with two broader disciplinary movements. First, OI research increasingly emphasizes distributed search, ecosystem dynamics, and external knowledge integration in complex environments (West & Bogers, 2014; Laursen & Salter, 2006). Second, marketing research increasingly focuses on interactive relationships, engagement behaviors, and experience-centric value creation, accelerated by digital touchpoints (Brodie et al., 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). The overlay map implies that marketing-OI scholarship sits at the intersection of these movements, using digital contexts as the empirical setting where openness is observed and tested. The field is moving from “OI as strategy” toward “OI as digitally enacted market process,” where engagement infrastructures (platforms, communities, social media) operationalize openness (Nambisan, 2017; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Research hotspots

Density visualization reflects the concentration of co-occurrence activity (figure 3): brighter areas indicate topics with high frequency and strong co-linkages. Value co-creation and marketing appear as enduring hotspots, suggesting they remain central anchors of the domain. This finding aligns with the strong influence of S-D logic and co-creation scholarship on marketing’s conceptualization of openness (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Payne et al., 2008).

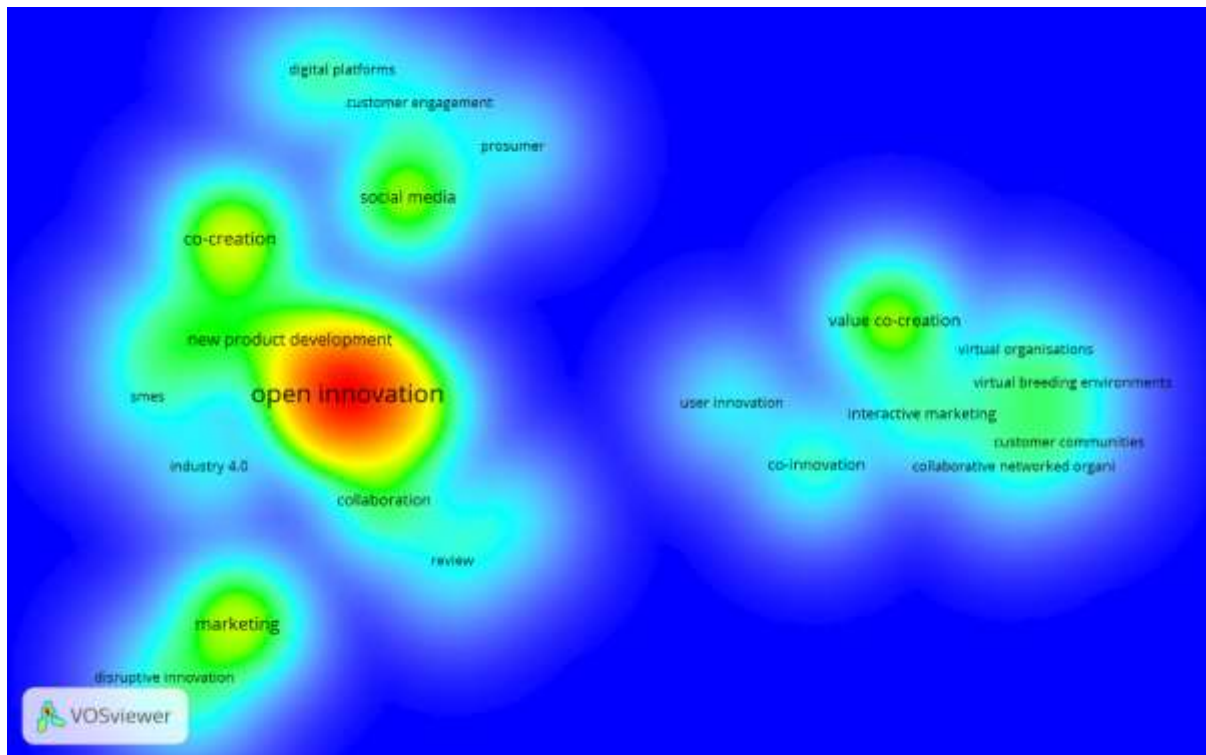


Figure 3. Density Visualization

A second high-density region centers around interactive marketing, customer communities, and networked/virtual organizational constructs, indicating sustained attention to community-mediated innovation and ecosystem coordination. Such hotspots suggest that marketing-OI scholarship prioritizes interaction design, community governance, and relationship-based mechanisms as core drivers of innovation outcomes (Brodie et al., 2011; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). In practical terms, density hotspots point to where theoretical consolidation is strongest. When “value co-creation” and “marketing” remain intense across time, it suggests that subsequent empirical studies frequently rely on these constructs as explanatory frames, potentially at the cost of construct proliferation and overlap (Ranjan & Read, 2016; Donthu et al., 2021). This observation motivates a key agenda item: improving construct clarity and measurement alignment across studies..

Discussion

The three visualizations collectively indicate that marketing-oriented open innovation (OI) research is structured around a central hub (“open innovation”) and three interdependent thematic streams: (1) co-creation and new product development (NPD), (2) digital engagement and prosumption via social media and platforms, and (3) value co-creation and interactive marketing within communities and networked organizational forms. Taken together, the maps suggest that marketing scholarship operationalizes OI primarily through participatory market mechanisms—customer involvement, community interaction, and platform-based engagement—rather than through purely technological or R&D-centric measures (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Beyond this general structure, the mapping reveals several non-obvious insights. First, co-creation and customer engagement emerge as bridging concepts connecting all three clusters, indicating that they function as conceptual translators between innovation processes, relational marketing, and ecosystem governance. This bridging role suggests that these constructs are not merely topical themes but integrative mechanisms through which OI is enacted in market contexts. Second, the relative separation between governance- and IP-related terms and engagement-heavy clusters points to an underexplored link: while engagement and participation are extensively studied, the institutional and governance conditions that sustain them receive comparatively less empirical attention. Third, the overlay visualization highlights emerging topics related to digital platforms, communities, and ecosystem perspectives, suggesting a shift from viewing OI as a firm-level strategy toward understanding it as a digitally enacted, market-facing process embedded in platforms and networks (Nambisan, 2017).

At a conceptual level, the maps imply convergence between OI’s knowledge flow logic and service-dominant logic’s interaction-based view of value creation. Openness is increasingly framed as resource integration across actors within ecosystems, with marketing playing a central role in designing the interaction architecture—touchpoints, engagement platforms, and community incentives—that renders knowledge flows productive (Payne et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Empirically, the growing focus on digital contexts reflects scholars’ reliance on observable digital traces such as engagement behaviors and community participation. However, the mapping also exposes a methodological risk: the increasing use of digital engagement metrics as proxies for innovation inputs or outcomes without sufficient validation of underlying mechanisms (Ranjan & Read, 2016; Brodie et al., 2011).

Co-creation as a bridge between OI and marketing

Marketing studies often present co-creation as a means to access tacit customer knowledge and increase adoption by building psychological ownership and fit (Hoyer et al., 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). OI literature similarly values external knowledge, but warns of coordination costs, leakage, and appropriability challenges (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; West & Bogers, 2014).

A key tension is whether co-creation should be treated as “always beneficial.” Evidence across domains suggests non-linearities: too much openness can overwhelm firms, create noise, and reduce performance without absorptive and integrative capabilities (Laursen & Salter, 2006; Dahlander & Gann, 2010). Marketing-OI research can contribute by identifying boundary conditions (e.g., product type, customer expertise, community governance) under which co-creation improves innovation.

Engagement and prosumption

Engagement theory often treats engagement as a relationship-strengthening state or behavior that yields loyalty, advocacy, and customer lifetime value (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). The bibliometric clustering suggests engagement is increasingly treated as an innovation input as well: engaged customers become contributors of ideas, feedback, and co-development labor. This shift is theoretically meaningful because it connects engagement to OI’s knowledge flow mechanisms (von Hippel, 2005; Nambisan, 2017).

However, engagement is multifaceted, and measurement varies widely. Without harmonization, studies risk comparing “engagement” constructs that represent fundamentally different phenomena (e.g., attention vs. participation vs. co-design). This reinforces the need for construct clarity and validated measurement models that distinguish engagement as psychological state, behavioral manifestation, and innovation contribution (Brodie et al., 2011; Ranjan & Read, 2016).

Value co-creation and interactive marketing

The persistence of value co-creation indicates that marketing-OI scholarship is deeply aligned with S-D logic and service ecosystems perspectives, emphasizing interaction, resource integration, and value-in-use (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Grönroos, 2008). Interactive marketing appears as an enabling mechanism: it describes the continuous, adaptive interactions that allow firms to learn, personalize, and iterate offerings core features of OI in digital markets (Brodie et al., 2011; Payne et al., 2008).

Yet ecosystem-based openness increases governance complexity. Platforms and communities require rules about participation, IP, data use, and moderation. OI research emphasizes the tension between sharing to enable innovation and protecting to capture value (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; Chesbrough, 2006). Marketing research can extend this by investigating how governance design shapes trust and sustained community participation, especially as data-driven personalization raises ethical concerns about privacy and consent (Nambisan, 2017; Jacobides et al., 2018).

Research Agenda

Building on gaps and linkages identified through the bibliometric mapping, several future research directions emerge. First, research should examine governance and intellectual property mechanisms in platform- and community-based OI, particularly how rules, incentives, and IP arrangements shape sustained participation across ecosystems. Second, there is a need for measurement validation of engagement metrics, distinguishing between attention, interaction, contribution, and co-development as analytically distinct forms of engagement. Third, future studies should address ethical and societal issues in digital OI, including data ownership, privacy, algorithmic bias, and consent in platform-mediated co-creation. Fourth, research should investigate boundary conditions of co-creation effectiveness, identifying when openness enhances versus constrains innovation performance across product types, industries, and organizational capabilities. Finally, greater effort is needed toward theoretical integration, developing frameworks that explicitly link OI, engagement, and value co-creation within ecosystem and service-based perspectives rather than treating them as parallel constructs.

Together, these directions demonstrate how bibliometric mapping not only describes the intellectual structure of marketing-oriented OI research but also reveals underexplored connections and priority areas for advancing theory and empirical rigor.

4. CONCLUSION

This study synthesizes the conceptual and empirical development of open innovation (OI) in marketing research using bibliometric science mapping. The network visualization shows that marketing-oriented OI scholarship is structured around three interrelated thematic streams: co-creation and new product development, digital and social media-enabled engagement and prosumption, and value co-creation through interactive marketing and community-based, networked organizational forms. The overlay visualization indicates a temporal shift from foundational marketing and innovation topics toward platform- and engagement-centered research, reflecting the growing influence of digitalization and ecosystem perspectives. Density patterns further highlight enduring hotspots around value co-creation and marketing, underscoring the central role of service-dominant logic as a key theoretical anchor in this domain. The mapping results suggest that OI in marketing is predominantly conceptualized and operationalized through participatory market mechanisms rather than technology- or R&D-centric lenses. Co-creation and engagement emerge as bridging constructs linking innovation processes, relational marketing, and ecosystem governance. This pattern implies a need for greater theoretical integration across OI, engagement, and value co-creation frameworks, as well as clearer construct definitions and measurement alignment, particularly for engagement-related indicators that span psychological, behavioral, and innovation-oriented dimensions. From a practical perspective, the thematic patterns observed in the mapping allow cautious inferences regarding how firms approach OI in market contexts. The prominence of customer involvement, communities, and digital platforms suggests that managers increasingly view marketing activities as boundary-spanning interfaces for sourcing external knowledge. Rather than implying causal performance effects, the findings indicate that firms often embed OI practices within customer touchpoints such as brand communities, feedback systems, and social media environments. The literature further implies that engagement architectures emphasizing structured

contribution (e.g., ideation formats, peer feedback) are favored over reliance on shallow interaction metrics alone. These implications should be interpreted as reflections of dominant research themes rather than prescriptive evidence of effectiveness.

This review is subject to limitations inherent to bibliometric methods. Keyword co-occurrence networks depend on the quality and consistency of metadata and do not capture the substantive rigor or causal validity of individual studies. Bibliometric mapping reveals structural and thematic patterns but cannot establish causal relationships between OI practices and outcomes. Future research should complement science mapping with systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and longitudinal empirical studies to validate mechanisms, assess performance effects, and examine governance, ethical, and measurement challenges in platform-based and community-driven OI.

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